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NationsCup

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WelcomeMessages

MESSAGE FROM OFC PRESIDENT

Over two days in October, Australia and the team from the Solomon Islands will participate in the Oceania Football Confederation 2004 Nations Cup/Confederations Cup play-off. This means that for the first time since 1998, a team other than New Zealand will play against Australia in the OFC Confederations Cup play-off for the privilege of taking part in the FIFA Confederations Cup, which will be held this time around in Germany between 15th and 29th June 2005.

I have no doubt that many of the players involved in this showcase of talent will go on to fame and perhaps superstar status within professional football. These are extremely important matches for all those players, coaches and officials taking part. Coaches, players and officials will all leave this play-off series with increased international experience that will hopefully prove valuable to them in their careers.

I look forward to these games not only because OFC have a new competitor in the arena but to watch matches that will not only be exciting but also played within the spirit of fair play that is cherished so highly within our beautiful game. It is now up to both teams to make this an unforgettable play-off series and one, I am sure, we are all looking forward too with much anticipation and excitement.

Reynold Temarii

Reynold Temarii
OFC President

MESSAGE FROM ASA CEO

On behalf of Chairman Frank Lowy and the Board of the Australian Soccer Association, it is with great pleasure that I welcome all the players, officials, spectators and special guests to this second leg of the Oceania Nations Cup / FIFA Confederations Cup qualifier between the Qantas Socceroos and the Solomon Islands.

Tonight's match is another sign of the commitment from ASA to have our national team playing on home soil with regularity and gives Australia's sporting public another chance to see our host of world class talent perform in their own backyard. The result of this series against the Solomon Islands can not be understated. The winner will be rewarded with a place in the Confederations Cup and play the likes of Brazil, Argentina, Germany and Greece which will prove to be vital as we attempt to qualify for the World Cup.

Our visitors tonight, the Solomon Islands, turned the heads of world football fans with a string of impressive performances in Adelaide during June's OFC Nations Cup, and I'm certainly looking forward to seeing this emerging and exciting soccer nation in Sydney.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank ASA sponsors, Qantas, the Australian Sports Commission and Nike for their continued support of Australian soccer.

Enjoy the match!

John O'Neill

John O'Neill
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Soccer Association

MESSAGE FROM FIFA

On 9 October 2004, Honiara provided the setting for the first leg of the 2004 OFC Nations Cup finals between Solomon Islands and Australia. Today, the stage is set in Sydney for the return leg of these finals which will determine the OFC representative at the 2005 FIFA Confederations Cup in Germany.

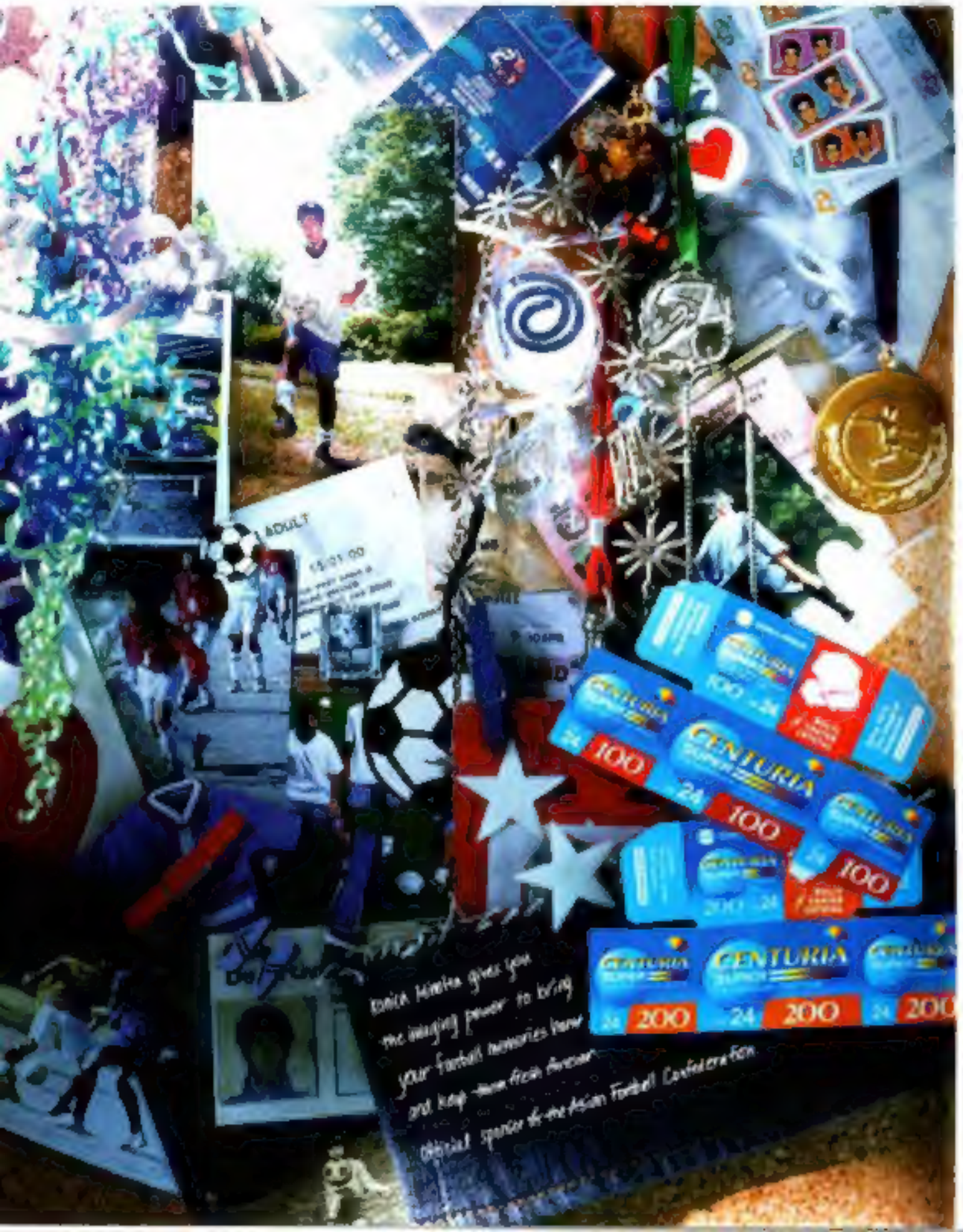
While Australia are the heavyweights of the game down under, the Solomon Islands team wrote a beautiful chapter of football history when it qualified for the finals of the OFC Nations Cup, a feat that made headlines throughout the global world of our game. Incidentally, in their last match that pitted them against the Socceroos, they pulled off an unexpected 2-2 draw in Adelaide.

I am convinced that these finals will provide a fitting apotheosis and conclusion to Oceania's premier national team competition. On behalf of FIFA and the international football community I send my best wishes to both teams, but also to the spectators, media and organisers for a successful event to be contested in the true spirit of fair play.

Joseph S. Blatter

Joseph S. Blatter
FIFA President

KONICA MINOLTA



RoadtoGermany

2005 FIFA Confederations Cup/2006 FIFA World Cup

Oceania 2006 World Cup Qualifiers (2004 Oceania Nations Cup)

Stage 1
Split into two groups of five, Stage 1 featured all Oceania Football Confederation members, except Australia and New Zealand, who were automatically seeded into Stage 2. American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga and Vanuatu played in Samoa and Solomon Islands between 11-20 May. Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Vanuatu won through to Stage 2.

Stage 2
Australia, New Zealand, plus the four Stage 1 qualifiers (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Vanuatu) played each other once in a league system between May 29 - June 6 in Adelaide. The winner, Australia, and runner-up, Solomon Islands, advanced to Stage 3 (Oceania Nations Cup Final/Oceania World Cup play-off).

Stage 3 (Oceania Nations Cup Final)
Australia and Solomons to play-off home and away on 9 and 12 October 2004 to decide the 2004 Oceania Nations Cup winner and the right to represent Oceania at the FIFA Confederations Cup in Germany (15-29 June 2005).

Stage 3 (World Cup)
Australia and Solomon Islands to play-off home and away in September 2005 for the right to advance to the Oceania/South America play-off.

Oceania/South America play-off
The winner of Stage 3 (World Cup) will play-off against the fifth placed South American nation in late 2005 for a berth at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany.

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Tim Cahill on the ball for Australia.

LongWaytotheTop

By Guy Hand

It sounds brilliant. Playing for your country, playing in an FA Cup Final, playing in the English Premier League, competing at an Olympic Games – all in the space of six months.

Australian Tim Cahill has done it, ticking the boxes so many of us who love the beautiful game aspire to in an unforgettable 180 days.

A Socceroos debut against South Africa in late March, a Cup final appearance against Manchester United in May, a dream move in August to Premier League giant Everton and playing for Australia at the Athens Olympics.

But like most things worth having, they haven't come easily to the 24-year-old, who's cleared more hurdles than Jana Pittman to make his dreams reality.

A long, frustrating fight to represent the country of his birth was resolved in March, when FIFA changed its eligibility rules to allow Cahill to play for Australia after a now infamous youth tournament appearance for his mother Sio's birthplace, Western Samoa, as a 14-year-old substitute.

Originally he was advised that the under-20 tournament in Fiji wouldn't jeopardise his right to choose which country he would represent at senior level.

Whoever advised him – and Cahill won't say who it was – couldn't have been more wrong, effectively slapping him in international handcuffs and sending him and his father Tim senior on a 10-year odyssey to find the key.

"That scarred me for the rest of my life," Cahill said.

"I want to close the door on that part of my life."

Now he's been able to walk through the one door national coach Frank Farina has gleefully opened for him to become a Socceroo.

And it's been worth the wait. Cahill's happy knack for getting forward from midfield and scoring has brought six goals in his four senior international appearances so far, including a memorable headed hat-trick against Fiji in Adelaide in June.

It's a long way since he initially left Sydney as a 16-year-old in 1996, travelling to England to achieve his dream of becoming a professional footballer thanks to a bank loan his father took out to finance the trip.

But there was no Liverpool or Manchester United for Cahill at the end of his plane trip. He ended up in one of the less salubrious parts of south London – Millwall.

A club more noted for its feared football hooligans than its on-field exploits, it was languishing in division two.

Cahill worked his way through the youth team, making his first team debut in 1998 and becoming a first-team regular two years later.

His rise coincided with that of his club, which – under the chairmanship of millionaire stationery magnate Theo Paphitis – won promotion to division one and, in April sealed a spot in the FA Cup Final.

Cahill scored the winning goal in the semi-final over Sunderland – his Australian profile lifted no end by news footage of his celebration in which he whipped off his shirt and whirled it skyward.

But Cahill – only the third Australian to play in an FA Cup final after Joe Marston for Preston in 1954 and former Liverpool star Craig Johnston in 1986 and 1988 – and his team couldn't produce a fairytale against the mighty Manchester United, losing 0-3 at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

Then the Aussie found himself in another fight. This time it was with Millwall over a transfer, amid claims his agents wanted a six-figure sum for a move to Premier League side Crystal Palace to proceed.

The club said Cahill and his agents had repeatedly expressed the player's wish to leave. Cahill and his agents said he had never asked to leave and Millwall had not offered him a new contract.

Eventually the move to Crystal Palace broke down and instead Cahill joined Everton in a $4 million, four-year deal just prior to the Olympic Games.

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adidas

Tim Cahill takes on the Solomon Islands in Adelaide.

Cahill made it clear to Everton on signing how important playing for his country was. Everton responded by letting him go to Athens with their blessing before he had even kicked a ball for the club.

"There was never any shadow of a doubt about playing in Greece," he said.

"Whatever Premier League club, they've got to deal with it and be happy for you.

"That's what Everton are and that did make a big decision in why I went to Everton.

"Your international career is a long one and you need to make the most of it, so as with the Premier League.

"It's all about give and take and having a good relationship and that seems to be what we've got at the moment."

That's great news for Farina – an unabashed Cahill fan who can rest easy that the club versus country wrangle won't be an issue with a player who is likely to be pivotal in the Socceroos' quest to make the 2006 World Cup finals.

"He gives us the potential to get forward from the midfield and actually score goals," Farina said.

"He brings to us his experience, his ability to win the ball in the midfield, his workrate and obviously that ability to score goals."

Cahill's rise is only likely to continue upon his move to the Premiership, which offers him the chance to lift his game to new heights in the cut and thrust of one of the world's most combative leagues.

He hasn't been found wanting at top level, helping Everton into the upper reaches of the Premier League table early in the season and also getting on the scoresheet despite copping a one-match ban last month for his trademark chest-beating celebration on scoring his first goal for the Toffees.

Cahill's emergence gives Farina a wealth of midfield options.

Throw Cahill into the Socceroos midfield mix with Marco Bresciano, Vince Grella, Josip Skoko and Scott Chipperfield to back up an already potent strikeforce and Australia's international future looks bright indeed.

Cahill, Bresciano and Grella are all under 25 years of age and should be at their peak for the Socceroos' date with destiny against the fifth-placed South American team late next year for a spot at the 2006 World Cup finals.

For Cahill, victory in the Oceania Nations Cup final against the Solomon Islands will ensure him more chances to test his international credentials.

The winner qualifies for the FIFA Confederations Cup in Germany in June next year – the perfect litmus leading into the World Cup playoff.

In an era when players are so often tempted to put club before country, Cahill is a refreshing change.

He wants to play for Australia. He loves it, craves it, and unlike most, has fought long and hard for it.

"I can't describe what it felt like to spend all that time just sitting and waiting, thinking to myself 'will I ever get the chance to play on the world stage'," he said.

"International football is what you aspire to as a footballer and my heart belongs to Australia."

An Italian Affair

By Michael Lynch*

As he jetted into Australia for the two vital qualification matches against the Solomon Islands Vince Grella celebrated his 25th birthday. Such anniversaries are often times when people take stock of where they are in life, and if Grella needed time to pause and reflect on what has been a tumultuous 18 months in his career, the long plane journey from Italy to Australia would have been the perfect opportunity

It was in February 2002 that Grella made his full 'A' international debut, coming off the bench for the Socceroos in the historic 3-1 victory over England at West Ham's Upton Park ground. Back then the Melbourne born and raised midfielder was a name well known in domestic soccer circles but not so widely known in the general sporting community.

Since then his involvement with the national team, for which he is fast emerging as a first choice midfielder, has cemented his status in the Australian soccer world and seen him begin to develop a profile beyond its narrow confines.

His off season move to one of Serie A's biggest clubs, Parma, has raised not just his status, but expectations for his level of performance.

While a regular at battling Empoli, Grella commanded respect for the fact that he was good enough to play in Italy's upper echelon.

The move to a club – albeit one still coming to terms with the fallout from the Parmalat financial collapse – which regularly challenges for Champions League and UEFA Cup places in one of the world's toughest competitions raises the stakes still further and provides Grella with the sort of challenge he relishes.

At 29 he is at the peak of his powers and should, over the next four years, enjoy the best period of his career – a prospect which bodes well for the Socceroos as the national team looks to the tough tackling midfielder to provide not just defensive grunt in the centre of the park but contribute as a creative force with accurate, prompting passes that turn defence into attack.

Grella's success is a testament to the positive powers of self belief, hard work and commitment. While he was a successful junior – good enough to be taken by the Australian Institute of Sport as a 16-year-old in 1996 – not everyone expected him to become a star.

Like many an AIS youngster before him, he got his first exposure to senior football with the Canberra Cosmos in the NSL before moving back home to Melbourne to become part of the new Carlton side that was formed in the late 1990s.

There he linked up with his childhood friend and best mate Marco Bresciano – the first of numerous soccer partnerships the duo have established down the decade – and another promising teenager destined to later earn Socceroo honours, Simon Colosimo.

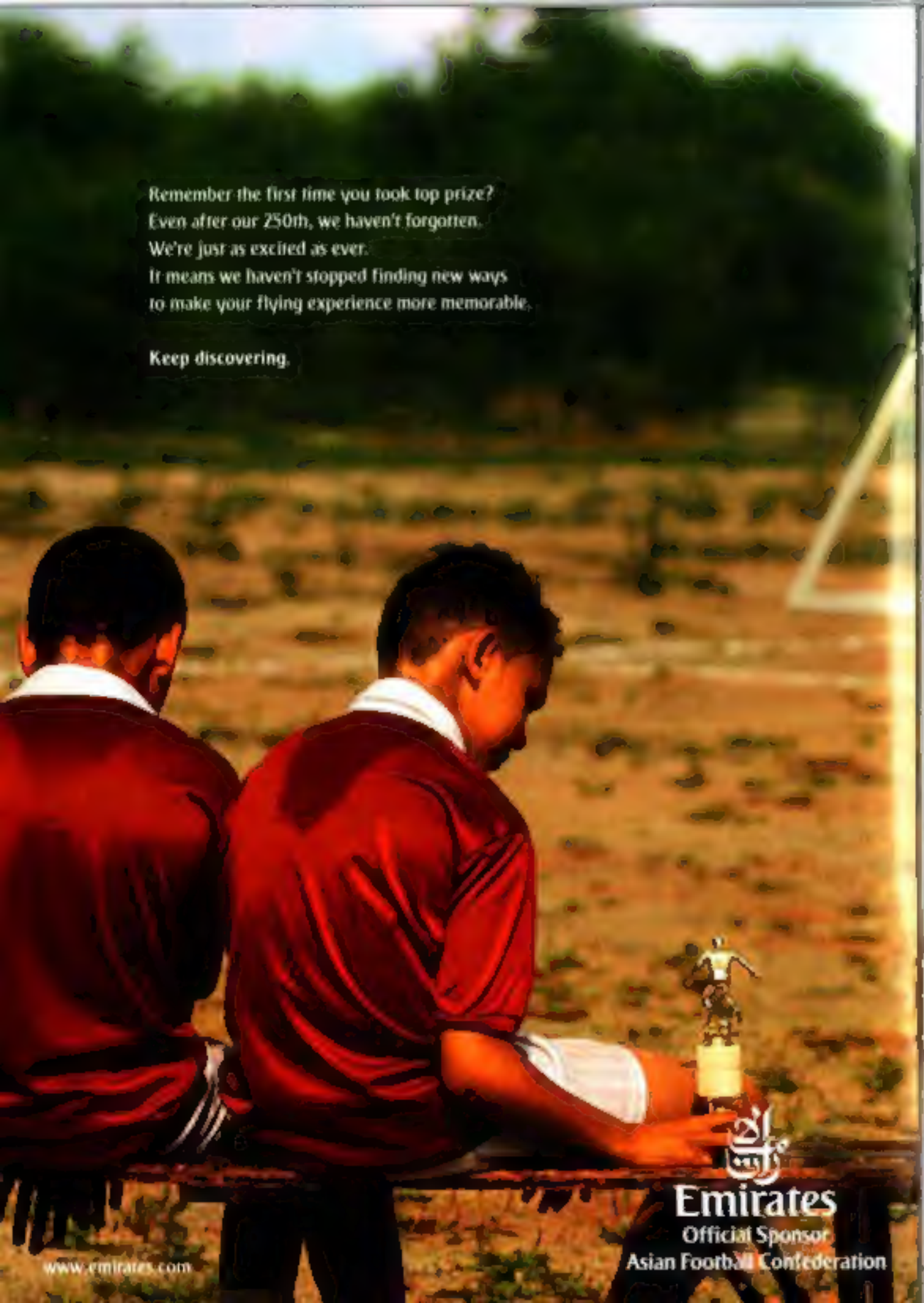
While Colosimo and Bresciano more often took the plaudits, Grella was a steady contributor in the team's engine room as it made a Grand Final in its debut season, eventually losing 2-1 to South Melbourne.

He did enough to win selection for the Australian Under 20 Young Socceroo side for two Youth World Cups – the 1997 edition in Malaysia and the 1999 version in Nigeria – and, crucially, impressed enough to secure a move to Italy where, along with Bresciano, he joined then Serie B side Empoli. He also figured in an Australian squad which played against a touring Manchester United team, although these games were not classified as internationals.

Both Grella and Bresciano developed and honed their skills in the highly competitive environment that is Italy's second tier, both playing their parts in helping the unfashionable Empoli to promotion to the Serie A.

Along the way Grella – once again with his pal Bresciano – gained more representative honours, winning selection for the Australian squad for the Sydney Olympics. A highlight was the opening match in front of a capacity crowd at the MCG when Grella was in the starting eleven against an Italy team containing many of the players he faced in domestic competition in the Italian leagues. Unfortunately the memories were painful, as the Azzuri ran out 1-0 winners with a late goal, sending the Olyroos into a spiral of defeat from which they would not recover. Eventually they were eliminated at the group stage, losers in all three games.

With Socceroo skipper Paul Okon playing in the same position as Grella, his chances of senior selection looked slim. And so it proved. While Bresciano was called into the national team set up in June 2001 and made his senior debut in the Confederations Cup campaign in Korea and Japan that saw Australia defeat Brazil and France, Grella was left to cool his heels with Empoli in the Serie A.



Eventually the break came in February 2003, when he was drafted into the party for the groundbreaking match against England at Upton Park.

Confident and highly focused, Grella did not miss a beat when he arrived in the team hotel before the game and immediately looked at home amongst experienced internationals. He came off the bench in the closing stages to win his first full cap and was delighted to be part of a history making team.

It was an auspicious arrival and one which, finally, gave the lie to the critics who believed that he did not quite have the quality or the pace to make it at the highest level, those who had whispered behind his back that his ambitions outstripped his ability.

It might have been tempting to hit back at the doubters, but Grella kept his own counsel, instead happier to pay tribute to his parents, Tony and Maria, who sustained him while he was a boy chasing his dreams at home in Springvale.

"I have always dreamt of it," he said at the time of his debut, although he resolutely refused to get carried away with the achievement. "But it's not as if I have turned up today and I am a superstar. I know my limits. But I have always had the hunger and I have never let managers, or money or all this bullshit that goes behind soccer to get in the way of my dreams.

"It wasn't easy, especially for family and friends. They look out for you they don't want you to go through the hard times in case you don't make it."

Grella is now settled in the country of his parents' birth, having married a girl from just outside Empoli (Barbara) who gave birth to the couple's first children, twin girls Victoria and Sophia in 2002. That family closeness has helped make him the player he is now.

"I think it's more than half of why I have been able to make the progress I have. But I have always had the determination. I have worked hard. I had a lot of hiccups when I first got to Italy and then I had this problem with my knee that wouldn't let me play properly. Some people were a little bit harsh ... they would say things like he's in Italy, yes, but he hasn't played, he's on holidays, he's never going to break through. They never tell you to your face but it gets back to you through the rumour mill."

Grella puts down his improvement to playing regular football with and against high level players.

"I have not got quicker. But being in Italy has helped me tactically. I just know the position so much better. As someone grows physically they become a lot stronger and so does their personality as well. Knowing that you can play at that level has given me confidence."

Since then Grella has continued to improve, first becoming a regular member of the Socceroo squad, then replacing Okon in the holding midfield role. It was, as he admits, an occasion where the apprentice succeeded the master, Okon having been an inspiration to the young Grella not just in the way he played the position, but the fact that he was one of the first Australians with the ability and the desire to blaze a trail into the Serie A and play in Italy.

After he signed for Parma in a $5 million deal in August (once more linking up with Brescianol, Grella made it clear the debt of gratitude he owed the former Socceroo captain, declaring that his support for younger players like himself had been exceptional.

"I have followed Okon from the days he was playing at Marconi," Grella said.

"When he went to Lazio, a big Italian club, I followed him minute by minute.

I always liked the way he played and having him in the Socceroo team for my first couple of games was very important. He is an experienced player who is always willing to help and talk with younger players."

Grella might now be playing with the big boys, but he insists his devotion to the national shirt remains as strong as it ever has been. He told his new bosses at Parma that his involvement with the national team would be 100%, and such was his commitment to the cause that he travelled to Caracas earlier this year to try to play against Venezuela even though he was carrying an ankle injury that subsequently kept him out of the game.

Whatever he achieves in the sport – and he already has achieved more than most Australian players can dream about – Grella is sure to keep his feet on the ground.

At the time he played his first game for Australia, he put the whole thing into perspective.

"My dad's a painter and I always thought if the worst comes to the worst I will go and work with him. If I hadn't made it and came back and became a painter what's the problem – I hadn't killed anyone, I hadn't robbed any banks or shot anyone."

There's not much likelihood of Vince Grella picking up the paint brushes, at least for many years yet.

** Michael Lynch is the soccer writer for the Melbourne Age*

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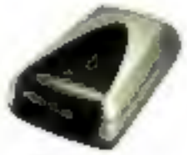

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Josip Skoko keeps his eye on the ball against Turkey.

NationsCup

Australia

No	Pos	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Club	Country
1	GK	MARK SCHWARZER	06.10.1972	MIDDLESBROUGH	ENGLAND
2	DF	KEVIN MUSCAT	07.08.1973	MILLWALL	ENGLAND
3	MF	SIMON COLOSIMO	08.01.1979	PAHANG	MALAYSIA
4	DF	LUCAS NEILL	09.03.1978	BLACKBURN ROVERS	ENGLAND
5	DF	TONY VIDMAR	04.07.1970	CARDIFF CITY	ENGLAND
6	DF	TONY POPOVIC	04.07.1973	CRYSTAL PALACE	ENGLAND
7	MF	BRETT EMERTON	22.02.1979	BLACKBURN ROVERS	ENGLAND
8	MF	JOSIP SKOKO	10.12.1975	GENCLERBIRLIGI	TURKEY
9	FW	JOHN ALOISI	05.02.1976	OSASUNA	SPAIN
10	FW	HARRY KEWELL	22.09.1978	LIVERPOOL	ENGLAND
11	FW/MF	MILE STERJOVSKI	27.05.1979	BASEL	SWITZERLAND
12	DF	STEPHEN LAYBUTT	03.09.1977	GENT	BELGIUM
13	MF	VINCE GRELLA	05.10.1979	PARMA	ITALY
14	FW	MAX VIERI	01.09.1978	TERNANA	ITALY
15	MF	LUKE WILKSHIRE	02.10.1981	BRISTOL CITY	ENGLAND
16	DF	JON McKAIN	21.09.1982	NATIONAL BUCHAREST	ROMANIA
17	FW	ARCHIE THOMPSON	23.10.1978	LIERSE	BELGIUM
18	GK	ZELJKO KALAC	16.12.1972	PERUGIA	ITALY
21	MF	AHMAD ELRICH	12.06.1981	BUSAN ICONS	KOREA
22	FW	ANTE MILICIC	04.04.1974	PAHANG	MALAYSIA

Head of Delegation	PHILLIP WOLANSKI
Senior National Team Coach	FRANK FARINA
Senior National Team Asst Coach	GRAHAM ARNOLD
Goalkeeping Coach	TONY FRANKEN
National Technical Manager	RON SMITH
Team Manager	GARY MORETTI
Doctor	DR ANDREW JOWETT
Physiotherapist	LES GELIS
Strength Conditioner	ANTHONY CREA
Gear Steward	DOMINIC RABSCH
Media Officer	STUART HOOGE

SolomonIslands

No	Pos	Name	Date of Birth	Club	Country
1	GK	FELIX RAY JR	12.09.83	NAHA	SOL
2	DF	LESLIE LEO	02.08.76	MAKURU	SOL
3	DF	MAHLON HOUKARAWA	23.04.76	KOLOALE	SOL
4	DF	MARTIN RUHASIA	24.11.77	MARIST	SOL
5	DF	GEORGE SURI	16.07.82	EAST COAST BAYS	NZ
6	DF	NELSON SALE KILIFA	07.10.86	MAKURU	SOL
7	MF	ALICK MAEMAE	10.12.85	MAKURU	SOL
8	MF	JOEL KONOFILIA	07.11.77	WYNNUM WOLVES	AUS
9	FW	KIDSTON BILLY	05.02.82	UNCLES	SOL
10	FW	BATRAM SURI	2.11.71	MAKURU	SOL
11	FW	COMMINS MENAPI	18.09.77	MAKURU	SOL
13	MF	GEORGE LUI	21.12.81	MAKURU	SOL
14	MF	JACK SAMANI	7.5.79	WYNNUM WOLVES	AUS
15	MF	STANLEY WAITA	10.10.79	NAHA	SOL
17	DF	GIDEON OMOKIRIO	12.10.78	KOSSA	SOL
18	MF	HENRY FA'ARODO JR	05.10.82	FAWKNER BLUES	AUS
19	MF	PAUL KAKAI JR	26.09.77	LAUGU	SOL
22	GK	FRANCIS ARUWAFU	09.03.75	KOLOALE	SOL

Head Coach	ALAN GILLETT
Assistant Coach	EDDIE NGAVA
Team Manager	FRANCIS JACK KAIRI
Physiotherapist	CHRIS LOARE
Trainer	MATAI VAVE

IslandDreaming

By Ben Coonan

When Spanish referee Eduardo Iturralde Gonzalez blew the final whistle on June's OFC Nations Cup in Adelaide, the roars of 500,000 Solomon Islanders could be heard around the world.

The Solomons, a nation more commonly associated with untouched beach-laden beauty than soccer achievement, had accomplished what many had thought to be a near impossibility.

Two blistering strikes from Solomons icon Cosmas Meneipi in their final match had ended Australia's unchallenged supremacy over their island opponents and assured the Solomons, ranked 68 places below their rivals, would contest their first ever OFC Nations Cup final.

Not one of the 2,978 fans on hand at Adelaide's Hindmarsh Stadium will forget the seldom seen raw emotion that greeted referee Gonzalez's final whistle.

A nation ravaged by internal strife and bitter political feuds had joined in a standstill to celebrate their finest hour.

The Solomon Islands, finally, and justifiably it seemed, had realised their potential.

Prior to their sensational finish in Adelaide, the idyllic South Pacific archipelago had forged a reputation of also-rans amongst Oceanic soccer circles.

Since partaking in their first OFC Nations Cup in February 1980, the Solomons have consistently failed to live up to their huge billing as the great entertainers of Oceania.

Their inaugural Nations Cup affair was a forgettable one.

Successive losses to Fiji, Tahiti and New Zealand ended their involvement at the group stage, with the Solomons copping 21 goals in response to their three.

The Nations Cup's hiatus between 1980 and 1996 severely hampered what little international exposure was afforded to the Solomons, but they did keep somewhat busy by participating in the bi-annual Melanesian Cup.

The Solomons hosted, and won the 1994 edition, their highest international achievement preceding June's tournament in Adelaide.

By virtue of winning the '94 Melanesian Cup, the Solomons qualified for the semi finals of the 1996 Nations Cup, a hastily organised competition established to find an Oceania representative for the 1997 Confederations Cup.

The Solomons' unfortunate Nations Cup record continued when they surrendered successive losses to Tahiti, meaning the Polynesians would then face Australia in the final.

The Nations Cup returned with regularity in 1998, when steamy Brisbane hosted a six-team tournament with the Solomons failing to qualify.

The Solomons lost out to Fiji and Vanuatu for a berth in Brisbane but were back amongst the contenders in Papeete, Tahiti, in 2000.

Having negotiated the same qualifying group that brought their peril in '98, the Solomons were faced with Australia and the Cook Islands at the group stage.

An opening 6-1 thrashing of the Cooks effectively assured the Solomons passage to the semi finals where they went down 2-0 to reigning champions New Zealand.

However, the Solomons regrouped following their semi-final defeat to post an impressive bronze medal finish by beating Vanuatu 2-1 in the playoff for third place.

Disappointingly, the Solomons failed to capitalise on their Papeete success at the next Nations Cup meet in Auckland 2002.

Having been granted automatic qualification for the expanded eight-team tournament, the Solomons were hotly tipped to progress from their group that featured hosts New Zealand, Tahiti and Papua New Guinea.

A first up stalemate with fellow Melanesians Papua New Guinea set the tone for a disappointing Solomons tournament, where they finished winless with only three goals to their name.

"Along the street youths, boys and girls and elderly were waiting to get a glimpse of their heroes. Never before was this kind of welcome given to any soccer team. Even the Parliament session has had to be suspended just to allow the Prime Minister and members of Parliament to welcome the team home. It was all jubilation everywhere and the motorcade which took the boys on the victory parade from Henderson to White River took almost three hours to complete."

– Solomon Islands Media Officer Francis Pitavaka describing the Solomons homecoming in June, following their epic 2-2 draw with Australia.

The Auckland tournament was typifying the inconsistency and unpredictability that had dogged Solomons soccer.

With Scotsman George Cowie at the helm and a healthy injection of Australian based talent on the pitch, the Solomons' results were of constant frustration to their soccer-obsessed fans at home.

Regrettably, things went from bad to worse post Auckland '02 for the Solomons.

Despite boasting an all-star line up for 2003's South Pacific Games in Fiji, the Solomons failed to emerge from the group stage.

Similarly, the Solomons sunk to their lowest ebb last January, where their Olympic team finished second bottom in a five-team group, thanks mainly to a 1-0 loss to traditional Oceania stragglers Samoa at Marcom Stadium.

From the ashes of the Solomons' shattered pride rose English born coach Alan Gillett, whom many credit with the reinvigoration of this enthusiastic soccer nation.

Gillett's task was seemingly simple: Restore the Solomons' pride and try to snag some results along the way.

"My job is to bring the Solomon Islands together and get them right behind their national team," Gillett said ominously before the Solomons' opening World Cup qualifier with Tonga in Honiara last May.

"Hopefully we'll repay their support by winning the tournament."

Expectation from the Solomons was at an all time low, but as has become the affable Brits' style, the Solomons did not only meet their expectations, but far exceeded them in a blistering two month purple patch that turned heads right around the footballing world.

Starting with a pair of friendly victories over Vanuatu, Gillett guided the Solomons through their first hurdle – a tricky qualifying group in Honiara featuring Tonga, New Caledonia, Tahiti and the Cook Islands – to bring them to Adelaide for the 2004 Nations Cup.

What followed was unprecedented, unlikely, unbelievable and ultimately, unparalleled sporting melodrama that will not be forgotten by the Solomons' soccer punditry for a long time to come.

Having beat Vanuatu, Tahiti and Fiji and losing to New Zealand in their previous matches, the Solomons were faced with the daunting proposition of squeezing a point from regional tyrants Australia in their final group match.

In what was their ninth competitive outing in 24 days, the Solomons were in irresistible form to earn a shock 2-2 draw, sealing their first berth in

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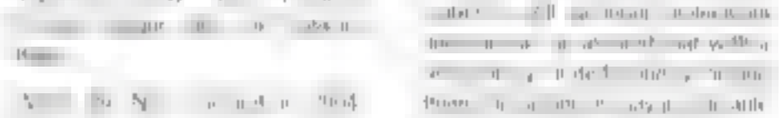

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Born: 5-Feb-76 Adelaide
Position: Striker
Soccerco honours: All internationals (1997-2004) 32 games (17 goals)
A internationals: 31 games (17 goals)
Other internationals: 1 game
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible] lead-up matches, 1995 World Youth Cup lead-up matches

Other Australian representative honours: Olympic games 2004 finals (Athens)
Australian Institute of Sport 199[illegible]
Current club: Osasuna (Spain)
Previous clubs (senior): Adelaide City [illegible] Belgium [illegible] Belgium [illegible] (Italy) [illegible] (England) [illegible] (England)

Born: 8-Jan-79 Melbourne
Position: Defender/Midfielder
Soccerco honours: All internationals [illegible] 2004) 20 games (2 goals)
[illegible] *ationals: 18 games (2 goals)*
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: *U20* - 1997 World Youth Cup qualifiers, 1999 World Youth Cup finals (Nigeria), *U23* - 2000 Olympic Games finals (Sydney)

Australian Schoolboy International 1996
Victorian Institute of Sport
Australian Institute of Sport 1996-199[illegible]

Current club: [illegible] (Malaysia)
Previous clubs (senior): [illegible] (Australia) [illegible] (Australia) [illegible] (Belgium) [illegible] (Australia) [illegible] (Australia)

Born: 30-May-81 Sydney
Position: Midfielder
Soccerco honours: All internationals (2004) 7 games (1 goal)
A internationals: 7 games (1 goal)
Underage Australian representative honours: *U20* - 2001 World Youth Cup finals (Argentina), *U23* - 2004 Olympic [illegible]

Current club: [illegible]
Previous club (senior): [illegible] (Australia)

Born: [illegible] Sydney
Position: Midfielder/Defender
Soccerco honours: All internationals [illegible] 2004) 36 games (8 goals)
A internationals: 31 games (7 goals)
[illegible] internationals: 5 games (1 goal)
Underage Australian representative honours: *U17* - 1995 World Youth [illegible] finals (Ecuador), *U20* - 199[illegible] World Youth Cup finals (Malaysia)

[illegible] Olympic Games finals [illegible]
New South Wales Academy of Sport
Australian Institute of Sport 1996

Current club: [illegible]
Previous clubs (senior): [illegible] (Australia) [illegible] (Holland)

Born: 5-Oct-79 Melbourne
Position: Midfielder
Soccerco honours: All internationals [illegible]
A [illegible] onals: 8 games
[illegible] internationals: 3 games
Underage Australian representative honours: *U20* - 1997 World Youth Cup finals (Malaysia), 1999 World Youth Cup [illegible]

[illegible] 2000 Olympic Games finals Sydney
Victorian Institute of Sport
Australian Institute of Sport 1996

Current club: [illegible] (Italy)
Previous clubs (senior): Springvale City [illegible] (Australia) [illegible] (Italy) [illegible] (Italy)

Born: 6-Dec-77 [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] All internationals [illegible] 1992-2004 [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: U17 - 1989 World You Championship squad member; U20 - 199[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible]

Born: 22-Sep-78 Sydney
Position: Midfielder/Striker
Soccerooo honours: All internationals [1996-2004 - 8 games (5 goals)]
[illegible] internationals 15 game[illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: U17 - 1995 World [illegible]
[illegible]

U20 - 199[illegible]
[illegible]

Current club [illegible]
Previous clubs (senior) [illegible]

Born: 3-Sep-77
Position: Defender
Soccerooo honours: All internationals [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: U23 - 2000 Olympic Games finals [illegible]
[illegible]

Current club [illegible]
Previous clubs (senior): [illegible] Wolves (Australia) [illegible]
[illegible]
Olympic (Australia) [illegible]
Brisbane [illegible]
[illegible]

Born: 21-Sep-82 Brisbane
Position: [illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Current club: [illegible]
[illegible]

Born: [illegible]
Position: [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: All internationals [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible]

Current club [illegible]
[illegible]

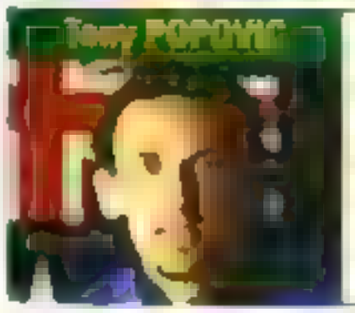
Born: [illegible]
Position: [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: All internationals [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Games lead-up matches, 1996 Olympic Games finals (Atlanta)
Australian Institute of Sport 1990-199

Current club: Millwall (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Sunshine George [illegible] Heidelberg (Australia) [illegible] Melbourne (Australia), Crystal Palace [illegible] Wolverhampton Wanderers [illegible]

Born [illegible]
Position [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Current club: Blackburn Rovers (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Millwall [illegible]



Born [illegible] **Position** [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Current club: Crystal Palace (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Sydney United (Australia), Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Japan)

Born [illegible]
Position [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Current club: Middlesbrough (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Marconi Stallions (Australia), Dynamo Dresden [illegible] Bradford City (England)

Born [illegible]
Position [illegible]
Soccerooo honours: [illegible]
[illegible]
Underage Australian representative honours: [illegible]
[illegible]

Other Australian representative honours: *Olympic games - 2004 final* [illegible]
Australian Institute of Sport 1992-1993

Current club: Genclerbirligi (Turkey)
Previous clubs (senior): North Geelong [illegible] Hajduk Split (Croatia), Gent (Belgium)

Mile STERJOVSKI

Born: 27-May-79, Wollongong
Position: Striker/Midfielder
Socceroo honours: *All internationals* (2000-2004) 14 games (3 goals)
A internationals: 14 games (3 goals)
Underage Australian representative honours: *U20* – 1999 World Youth Cup finals (Nigeria);
U23 – 2000 Olympic Games lead-up matches
Australian Institute of Sport 1996-1997

Current club: Basel (Switzerland)
Previous clubs (senior): Wollongong United (NSW), Wollongong Wolves (Australia), Sydney United (Australia), Parramatta Power (Australia)

Archie THOMPSON

Born: 23-Oct-78, New Zealand
Position: Striker
Socceroo honours: *All internationals* (2001) 7 games (16 goals)
A internationals: 7 games (16 goals)
Underage Australian representative honours: *U23* – 2000 Olympic Games lead-up matches
New South Wales Academy of Sport

Current club: Lierse (Belgium)
Previous clubs (senior): Morwell Falcons (Australia), Carlton (Australia), Marconi Stallions (Australia)

Tony VIDMAR

Born: 4-Jul-70, Adelaide
Position: Defender
Socceroo honours: *All internationals* (1991-2004) 78 games (2 goals)
A internationals: 63 games (2 goals) / Other internationals: 15 games
Underage Australian representative honours: *U23* – 1992 Olympic Games finals (Barcelona)
Australian Schoolboy International 1988

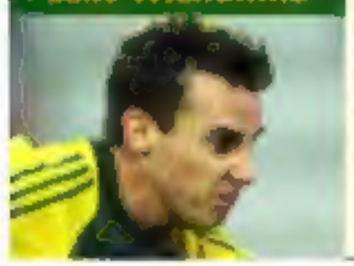
Current club: Cardiff City (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Adelaide City (Australia), Eisenn (Belgium), NAC Breda (Holland), Rangers (Scotland), Middlesbrough (England)

Max VIERI

Born: 1-Sep-78
Position: Striker
Socceroo honours: *All internationals* (2004) 5 games
A internationals: 5 games

Current club: Teramo (Italy)
Previous clubs (senior): Prato (Italy), Fano (Italy), Brescello (Italy), Ancona (Italy), Verona (Italy), Napoli (Italy)

Luke WILKSHIRE



Born: 2-Oct-81, Wollongong
Position: Midfielder
Underage Australian representative honours: *U20* – 2001 World Youth Cup finals (Argentina); *U23* – 2004 Olympic Games finals (Athens)
Australian Institute of Sport
New South Wales Academy of Sport

Current club: Bristol City (England)
Previous clubs (senior): Middlesbrough (England)

Francis ARUWAFU

Born: 9-Mar-75
Position: Goalkeeper
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers

Current Club: Koloale (Solomon Islands)

Kidston BILLY

Born: 5-Feb-82
Position: Striker
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2004 Qualifiers

Current Club: Uncles (Solomon Islands)

Mahlon HOUKARAWA

Born: 23-Apr-78
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers

Current Club: Koloale (Solomon Islands)

Henry FA'ARODO

Born: 5-Oct-82
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2004 Qualifiers, *U20* 2001 Qualifiers, *U17* 1999 Qualifiers

Current Club: Fawkner Blues (Australia)
Former Club: Melbourne Knights (Australia)

Paul KAKAI

Born: 26-Sep-77
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *U17* 1995 Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)

Nelson Sale KILIFA

Born: 7-Oct-86
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *U17* 2003 Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)

Joel KONOFILIA

Born: 7-Nov-77
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *U20* 1995 Qualifiers, *U17* 1993 Qualifiers

Current Club: Rangers (Solomon Islands)
Former Club: Brisbane Wolves (Australia)

Leslie LEO

Born: 2-Aug-76
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *U20* 1995 Qualifiers, *U17* 1993 Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)

George LUI

Born: 21-Dec-81
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *U20* 2001 Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)

Alick MAEMAE

Born: 10-Dec-85
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2004 Qualifiers, *U20* 2001 Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)

Commins MENAPI

Born: 18-Sep-77
Position: Striker
International Experience: 2000, 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2000 Qualifiers

Current Club: YoungHeart Manawatu (New Zealand)
Former Club: Sydney United (Australia)

Gideon OMOKIRIO

Born: 12-Oct-76
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2000, 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 1994, 1998, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 1996 Qualifiers, *U20* 1995 Qualifiers, *U17* 1993 Qualifiers

Current Club: KOSSA (Solomon Islands)

Felix RAY

Born: 12-Sep-83
Position: Goalkeeper
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2004 Qualifiers

Current Club: Naha (Solomon Islands)

Martin RUHASIA

Born: 24-Nov-77
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2000 Qualifiers

Current Club: Marist (Solomon Islands)

Jack SAMANI

Born: 7-May-79
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2000, 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2000 Qualifiers, *U20* 1999 Qualifiers

Current Club: Marist (Solomon Islands)
Former Club: Brisbane Wolves (Australia)

Batram SURI

Born: 2-Nov-71
Position: Striker
International Experience: 2000, 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 1994, 1998, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers

Current Club: Makuru (Solomon Islands)
Former Club: Football Kingz (New Zealand)

George SURI

Born: 19-Jul-82
Position: Defender
International Experience: 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2004 Qualifiers, *U20* 2001 Qualifiers

Current Club: East Coast Bays (New Zealand)

Stanley WAITA

Born: 10-Oct-79
Position: Midfielder
International Experience: 2000, 2002 & 2004 OFC Nations Cup, 2002 & 2006 World Cup Qualifiers
Underage Honours: *Olympic Games* 2000 Qualifiers, *U20* 1999 Qualifiers, *U17* 1995 Qualifiers

Current Club: Naha (Solomon Islands)

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee	PETER O'LEARY	(New Zealand)
Assistant Referee	PAUL DUNHAM	(New Zealand)
Assistant Referee	DHIRENDRA KEWAL	(Fiji)
4th Official	LEONIE RAKAROI	(Fiji)
Referee Inspector	YVES TAGA	(Vanuatu)
Match Commissioner	JOHNNY TINSLEY LULU	(Vanuatu)

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